

HISTORY OF CHIPPEWA FALLS PARK FACILITIES

CASPER PARK:

In 1972, the City of Chippewa Falls purchased 49 acres of land for recreational purposes with ORAP and LAWCON funds. The site was originally proposed to be a recreational site and storm water ponding area. The City later found out that federal regulations do not permit use of the purchased site as a storm water retention pond. In order to use this natural ponding area for storm water retention, a suitable replacement site had to be provided for recreation.

In 1994 the City purchased 55 acres of land on the west side of the City for a Family Sports Center. In 1996 Phase I was completed for a total cost of \$211,000. Funds were obtained from a grant from the DNR, private donations and city tax dollars.

In 1998 the park was named Casper Family Recreational Park in honor of William and Gertrude Casper. Today the park consist of four softball fields (Leinenkugel Complex), four soccer fields (Kell Container), and a Baseball Field (Gannon Family Baseball Field).

The City intends to bring in sports tournaments for softball, baseball and soccer. These types of tournaments draw large volumes of people and the City hopes to capture tourism dollars. The main emphasis of Casper park is to create a family oriented environment for year round outdoor activities. Additionally, the City owns property along the west side of the park and plans to develop cross country trails and nature trails.

CHRISTMAS VILLAGE:

The Chippewa Falls Christmas Village in beautiful Irvine Park is an impressive display of life size Christmas scenes reminiscent of the Victorian era and local historical replicas, along with a dazzling display of over 75,000 lights. Open during the holiday season from Thanksgiving evening until Jan 1,

Established in 1987 as an outgrowth of the Chamber of Commerce Retail Committee, the Christmas Village has grown into an independent project of great size involving individuals, businesses, volunteer organizations and city government. Each year promise to be full of exciting new displays, expanded lighting and whole new areas opening up.

IRVINE PARK:

Irvine Park has been a recreation resource and source of pride for Chippewa Falls residents for many decades. The park (including Glen Loch Lake and Duncan Creek) covers approximately 264 acres.

The size of Irvine Park and number of facilities within it has grown through the years as a result of many generous donations by local residents. This history of giving by local residents started in March, 1906 when William Irvine, a prominent Chippewa Falls businessman, has his firm,

Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company, donate 85 acres to the City. The Common Council passed a unanimous resolution naming the land Irvine Park after William Irvine. Additional

donations of land made in 1906 by Mr. Irvine, and Chippewa Lumber and Boom Co., and L.C. Stanley gave the City a piece of land 163 ½ acres in size, extending from Bridgewater Avenue to the south to the mill reserve at Glen Mills.

The use of Glen Loch Lake was donated by A.B. McDonell and other owners of Glen Mills property in 1907 (the Glen Mills property was located north of the 1907 park boundary). The park boundary was further expanded in October 1912 when the Chippewa Lumber & Boom Co. Donated an additional 100 acre tract of land. The land was located north of the 1907 park boundary, extending from the dam northwards to where the present day Highway “S” is located. Mr. Irvine donated money in 1914 to pay for a steel bridge (presently known as the Rumble Bridge) to span a large ravine in the north end of the park so that visitors could drive from one end of the park to the other. He also paid for the drive and clearing of trees. In addition, William Irvine set up a trust of over \$100,000 with the investment income from it to be used towards the maintenance and improvement of Irvine Park.

MARSHALL PLAYGROUND:

A parcel of land adjoining Irvine Park was donated by Mary Marshall in October 1935 and named the Marshall Playground. The playground was expanded to approximately 14 acres in size with another donation of land from Mary Marshall in July 1935. Margaret Barker gave a small part of land at the corner of Huron and Bridgewater Streets in August 1959, which was to be named the Hurd Picnic Area and maintained as a natural wooded park. In 1962, the dam site at Glen Loch Dam and the flowage rights were deeded to the City by The Chippewa Falls Foundation.

In December 1985, a donation of land adjacent to Irvine Park was made by Dr. Nicholas Fattu in memory of his wife, Jeanette Kalk Fattu. Dr. Fattu gave the City approximately 58 acres of land adjacent to the north part of the existing park (bordered by CTH “Q” to the west.). He stipulated that the land remains as a natural preserve with virtually no development except for hiking interpretative trails and that the parcel be known as the Kalk-Fattu Woodland Park.

In addition to land donations, several park facilities ranging from the picnic pavilion to picnic tables with roofs have been given by local residents. Among the large gifts, William Irvine donated the picnic pavilion in 1908 and the band shell in 1924. Northern States Power sold the streetcar depot and passenger station located in the park for \$1.00 to the City in 1926. Other park facilities which have been donated since then include the large picnic shelter on Flag Hill, the Red Barn which houses zoo animals, the School House, Log Cabin, the volleyball court, museum exhibits, and covered picnic tables among others.

Irvine Park has become a popular attraction for not only City residents, but also on a regional scale. Local resident’s history of generous donations of land and money for facilities in the park has resulted in a recreational resource gem for the City of Chippewa Falls and for visitors from other areas. Because of the park’s large size and the many recreational opportunities it offers, the cost of maintenance and improvements are considerable. Continued donations by local

residents and out of town visitors will help in renovating some of the park's aging facilities and in making new improvements so that the park will remain a source of pride in the community.

ZOO FACILITIES:

The Zoo display has been a major attraction in Irvine Park since the early 1900's. One of the first zoo buildings to be constructed was the bear cage in 1909. Still located on the same site on Bear Den Drive, the bear cage has been enlarged and remodeled several times since it was built. On the opposite bank of Duncan Creek, a zoo building for housing the monkeys and other small mammals was constructed in 1914 and was later replaced in 1962 with the existing concrete block structure. A lion cage was added to the main zoo building in 1971 and in 1978, the existing outdoor cages and fencing were installed.

The cages which house the bird and small mammal displays are the original structures which were built in the early 1900's. The red barn with young farm animals was donated by the Jaycees in 1966.

Large hoofed animals, such as the elk, deer and buffalo, have been in the park since at least the 1920's. In Ruth Willut's historical narrative about Irvine Park, she noted that the January 1929 Park Commission minutes described how several park elk were slaughtered and distributed to poor in the area in response to hard economic times being experienced locally.

The Animals in the Irvine Park Zoo are cared for by two full-time Zookeepers. The City Parks, Recreation & Forestry Dept., which oversees park operations, is a member of Wisconsin Zoo Associates and WPRA.

IRVINE PARK PAVILION:

The Irvine Park Pavilion was built in 1908 soon after the park was secured by the City. The pavilion was a gift from William Irvine and serves as a historical reminder of the Park's origins. The Pavilion is in very good condition and has been noted as an architecturally significant structure in a historic preservation survey of Chippewa Falls. The Pavilion can accommodate approximately 180 to 200 people at a time. Reservations for use of the pavilion have been taken for the many years and show that it is very much in demand as a park facility during the summer months. There are 48 reservations already in 1999 for the months of June, July & August.

The Irvine Park Pavilion is one of the park's more prominent features and contributes greatly to the unique turn of the century character and charm found in parts of Irvine Park. This character can continue to be preserved as long as the structure is well maintained and not altered physically. The pavilion and surrounding area could be further enhanced visually through a carefully designed site plan for the area which might include landscaping, a historical playground, compatible site furnishings and unobtrusive parking areas.

BAND STAND:

The band stand in Irvine Park is another structure of historical interest. Designed in the manner of the 19th century Romantic tradition, the band stand is memorial to “Our Soldiers and Sailors” given by William Irvine in 1924. The attractive band stand and picturesque location in the park with trees and the creek as a backdrop explain why it is a popular site for weddings during the warm months. Reservations have been accepted for many years. For 1999, the band stand has been reserved 48 dates including weekdays & weekends.

STREETCAR DEPOT:

The structure located near the Irvine Park entrance at Jefferson Avenue was the last depot and passenger station owned by the Chippewa Valley Electric Railway, Light and Power Company. Built in 1907, it was sold to the City for \$1.00 in 1926 and placed in Irvine Park. Because of the depot’s design and location, its use is more suited to historical interpretation rather than an active recreational use. It has not been frequently used by park visitors.

SCHOOL HOUSE AND LOG CABIN:

The Sunny Valley School House was moved to Irvine Park in 1965. The School House was originally located in the Town of Wheaton adjacent to Highway 29. Then the town school district merged with the Chippewa Falls School District in 1964, the Town of wheaton gave the school house to the Chippewa Falls Lions Club. They in turn donated it to the City and moved it to Irvine Park. The Sunny Valley School House was built in 1903 and was used by the school district from January 1904 until 1964.

The Log Cabin located near the Sunny Valley School House is presently owned, maintained and staffed by the Chippewa County Historical Society. The log cabin was moved from a site in Cornell to the park in 1979. The cabin is over 100 years old and was donated by Mrs. Clements Bayerl, who is a descendent of the original owners, Ole and Mari Bjerke.

The School House and Log Cabin are popular attractions for weekend park visitors. Two problems with the facilities are that they are somewhat isolated from other development in the park and there are no parking spaces available nearby.